Narrative Strategy in the Films of David Lynch

Filmography

- **Feature films**
- Inland Empire (2006)
- Mulholland Drive (2001)
- The Straight Story (1999)
- Lost Highway (1997)
- Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me (1992)
- Wild at Heart (1990)
- Blue Velvet (1986)
- Dune (1984)
- The Elephant Man (1980)
- Eraserhead (1977)

Short films

Boat (2007)
Darkened Room (2002)
Lumière et compagnie: Premonitions Following an Evil Deed (1996)
Industrial Symphony No. 1: The Dream of the Broken Hearted (1990)
The Cowboy and the Frenchman (1988)
The Amputee (1974)
The Grandmother (1970)
The Alphabet (1968)
Six Men Getting Sick (1966)

TV and Online

Dumbland (Online, 2002)
Rabbits (Online, 2002)
Hotel Room (TV, 1993)
On the Air (TV, 1992)
American Chronicles (TV, 1990)
Twin Peaks (TV, 1990-91)

Literary and Dramatic Structural Devices

Prologue:
The Elephant Man

Literary and Dramatic Structural Devices

Prologue:
Blue Velvet

Literary and Dramatic Structural Devices

Prologue:
Mulholland Drive

Literary and Dramatic Structural Devices

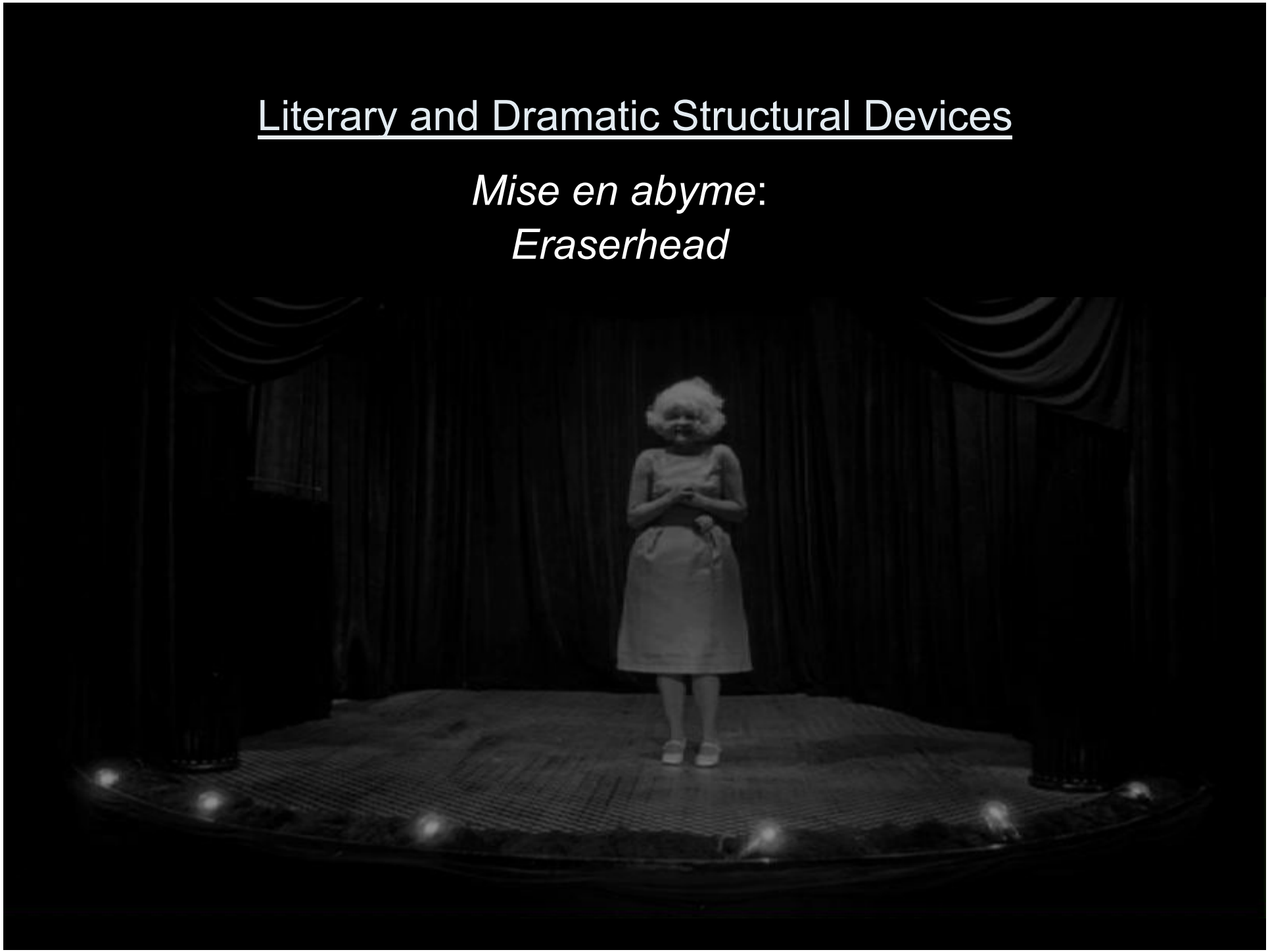
Framing 1:
Mulholland Drive

Literary and Dramatic Structural Devices

Framing 2:
Mulholland Drive

Literary and Dramatic Structural Devices

Mise en abyme:
Eraserhead



Literary and Dramatic Structural Devices

Mise en abyme:
Mulholland Drive's Club Silencio

Literary and Dramatic Approaches

Theater of Cruelty at Club Silencio

Postmodern / Metafiction Devices

- Self-referentiality
- Various forms of repetition
- The dream sequence and phantasmatic projection
- Non-linear and circular narrative
- Play on aporia

Postmodern / Metafiction Devices

Dream sequence and phantasmatic projection:

- Eraserhead: Henry Spencer's dream
- Elephant Man: John Merrick's dream
- Wild at Heart: Lulu's projection of her mother
- Twin Peaks: Dale Cooper's dreams
- Lost Highway: Fred Madison's psychogenic fugue
- Muholland Drive: Betty Elms' fantasy of love and fame
- Inland Empire: Blending of potential reality and phantasmatic space

Postmodern / Metafiction Devices

Non-linear narrative:

- Circularity in Lost Highway
- Analepsis and prolepsis in Mulholland Drive
- Parallel worlds in Inland Empire

Postmodern / Metafiction Devices

Staging Aporia: Inland Empire

Aporia and Dream-logic

“Cinema can say a dream logic. It can say things that are difficult to say in words.”

Aporia and Dream-logic

Aporias and inaccessible kernels:

"The **surface** is beautiful, but it's the surface, and so when we see a person we see the surface. As they begin to talk, we…get glimpses of something more than the surface... So, there's a thing in a person, you're seeing the surface, you're hearing the words, but there's something else there that somehow cinema could start saying." (Interview with Mike Figgis)

Aporia and Dream-logic

Aporias and inaccessible kernels:

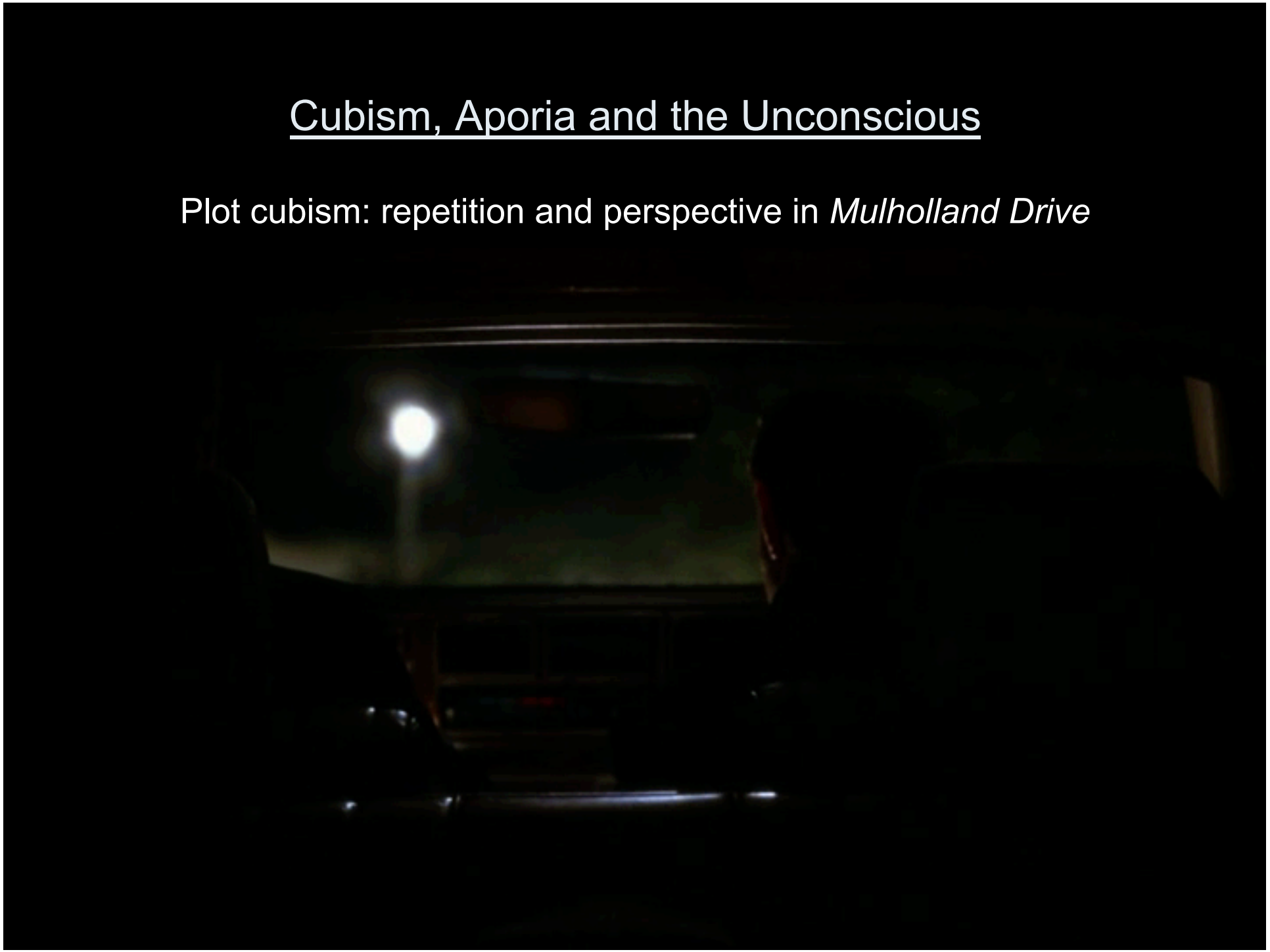
"The essential ingredient is completely unable to be communicated. There must be some added information coming in some way. So a little kernel is charged with certain knowledge" (Lynch on Lynch).

The Unconscious or Subtext of Film

”According to Freud, large parts of human thought remain unconscious; that is, the subject does not know about the content of certain troubling ideas and often much effort is needed to make them conscious. Undesirable thoughts will be repressed or kept from consciousness by the ego under the command of the super-ego, or conscience… Repressed thoughts can manifest themselves in dreams, nightmares, slips of the tongue, and forms of artistic activity. These ideas have also influenced film study and some psychoanalytic critics explore the 'unconscious' of the film text - referred to as the 'subtext' - analyzing it for repressed contents, perverse utterances, and evidence of the workings of desire.” (Barbara Creed, “Film and Psychoanalysis”)

Cubism, Aporia and the Unconscious

Plot cubism: repetition and perspective in *Mulholland Drive*



Aporias, Cubism and the Unconscious

Plot cubism: repetition and perspective in Mulholland Drive

The Double in Lynch's Hollywood Trilogy

Lost Highway *Mulholland Drive* *Inland Empire*

The Hollywood Trilogy

Jealousy, Murder and the Love Triangle (or Hexagon!)

Lost Highway

Fred and Renee Madison

Or: Pete Dayton and Alice Wakefield

Dick Laurent

Or: Mr. Eddy

The Hollywood Trilogy

Jealousy, Murder and the Love Triangle

Mulholland Drive

Camilla Rhodes and Diane Selwyn

Or: Rita and Betty

Camilla Rhodes and Adam Kesher

The Hollywood Trilogy

Jealousy, Murder and the Love Triangle (or Hexagon!)

Inland Empire

Nikki Grace
Susan Blue

Piotrek
White Trash Piotrek

Devon Berk
Billy Side